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16 October 1965

BRIEFING NOTES  
FOR DCI

NORTH VIETNAM

(MAP, Surface-to-Air Missile Sites)

I. The proliferation of SAM sites continues. We have now confirmed in photography 29 sites and there are indications that a few others exist.

A. I want to make it clear, however, that not all of these SAM sites are equipped with missile gear. We have been attempting to determine just how much missile equipment is in North Vietnam but thus far we have been unable to come to any firm figure.

1. We believe that there is enough missile equipment for a minimum of six sites and probably no more than ten sites.

2. The greatest number of sites noted with equipment at any one time was five. This information was obtained by photography on 8 October when 17 of the SAM sites were photographed.

B. Initially it was clear that Soviet personnel were in charge of missile operations. Although Soviets are still involved in missile operations we have evidence that Vietnamese personnel are taking over the operation of the SAM sites and that the Soviets are probably serving as advisors and technicians.

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1. We estimate that between 1,000 and 1,500 Soviet military personnel are in North Vietnam. We believe this figure will remain stable and there will be no further increase unless there is a sudden escalation of the conflict.
2. Soviet Defense Ministry officials have indicated that they do not want to get heavily involved but that they would continue to provide equipment for the Vietnamese.

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C. The SAM system has not yet proven to be as effective as was originally expected. We know that at least 58 missiles have been fired. On 5 October itself, nine missiles were fired against US aircraft attacking bridges in the Kep area of northeastern North Vietnam but only one found its mark. As of 15 October we have lost 131 aircraft. Most of these have been shot down by conventional antiaircraft artillery fire. Only five have been shot down by missiles. We have succeeded in rescuing 43 pilots. Another 45 pilots have been killed in action and 22 are believed to be POWs. The remainder are listed as missing in action. Altogether there have been in excess of 25,000 sorties over North Vietnam, which means that our percentage of aircraft lost remains at or slightly under one half of one percent. This compares favorably with the Korean War and World War II rates.

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3. Our Navy aircraft October 17th attacked and knocked out an operational SAM site at Kep Ha, northeast of Hanoi.

The pilots report they destroyed several guidance and control vans, 10 missile transporters, and two missiles. One of the missiles ignited, and could be seen snaking around on the ground, burning itself out. There were probably Soviet personnel at the site during the attack.

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1. The increasing number of misses can probably be explained in part by the fact that North Vietnamese crews are relatively inexperienced and are operating the equipment.
2. Complementing this are the successful evasive maneuvers our pilots have learned to execute when missiles are sighted.

II. In recent weeks our aircraft have been attacking targets in northeastern North Vietnam. Specifically, we have succeeded in cutting the all-important rail link to China over which much of the military equipment arriving in North Vietnam from Communist China and the USSR arrives.

- A. The North Vietnamese have put up an extremely vigorous defense in this area. Large numbers of missiles have been fired at our aircraft--fortunately, as I indicated, most have missed--and they have even committed some of their jet fighters against US aircraft--something they have been very reluctant to do.
- B. As air strikes in this area continue we can expect the North Vietnamese to use everything they have to defend the rail line from further destruction.

1. In an effort to improve their defenses in this area they have already positioned a number of their jet fighters at Kep--a recently improved airfield about 35 miles northeast of Hanoi.

III. Thus far our air strikes have severely limited North Vietnam's capability to support a major offensive beyond its own borders but its capability to support the

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insurgency in South Vietnam has not been diminished to any great degree.

- A. One of the major accomplishments of the airstrikes has been to force North Vietnam to disperse its personnel and supply bases and to divert large numbers of men and large amounts of materiel from economic projects to repair and reconstruction work.
- B. The economic losses caused by the air strikes are still small in relation to the total economic activity primarily because most of the targets we are attacking are military and outside the major economic and industrial areas.
  - 1. There are, however, increasing indications of localized strains on the economy, particularly in the supply of food and its distribution.
  - 2. The bombing of the rail lines leading from Communist China to Hanoi has probably had a greater effect on the economy than any other targets bombed to date.
- C. On the political side there continues to be no basic change in Hanoi's attitude and the North Vietnamese continue to assert their determination to press on with the war.

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IV. Seven months of almost daily bombings in the southern provinces of the DRV have created morale problems.

A. Individual citizens in private letters to relatives abroad express fears of personal safety and reflect a general unhappiness due to disruption of family life and casualties among family and friends.

B. [ ] furthermore, indicate that the regime has serious morale problems among the civilian work gangs repairing the bomb damage.

1. [ ] shortages of food and other daily necessities and reveal a high sickness and desertion rate.

2. None of these problems, however, is known to have generated any organized resistance to the DRV regime or its policies.

C. Even DRV propaganda refers backhandedly to the widespread disruption of normal civilian life in the bombed areas.

1. In the current campaign to publicize US atrocities in Vietnam, for example, the regime itself charges that the bombings have killed many people and "leveled cities."

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2. Although exaggerated, the statements constitute an admission that the regime has been unable to fully protect its civilian population from the side effects of raids.
- D. In the northern part of the country there are few signs of flagging morale. In the capital city of Hanoi, Western diplomats report that people migrate to the city from other parts of the country because they believe it is the safest place to be.
1. Complaints registered in private letters from many sections of the country tend to be balanced by others indicating strong popular support for the regime and reflecting an effective regime propaganda effort which directs individual emotions into constructive patriotic channels.

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